



EmployeeUPDATE

A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Our Mission: The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with its partners, protects the health and safety of all North Carolinians and provides essential human services.



NC FAST

Pilots begin delivering food and nutrition services benefits

Imagine a crowded waiting room with long lines of people. This has been a typical scene for people in need of assistance provided through DHHS and county departments of social services. A pilot program launched this summer is transforming North Carolina's system for delivering social services to make it more customer-focused for clients and more efficient for staff who administer the programs.



Secretary Al Delia visited Buncombe County DSS in July for an update on its progress as an NC FAST pilot. DSS staffers Karen Hart (left) and Terry Johnston (at computer) explained the benefits of the new system for clients.
 - Photo by Julie Henry

The North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) Program is designed to improve the way DHHS and the 100 county departments of social services provide benefits and services to some of the state's neediest families.

"With NC FAST and the changes to the service delivery system coming through the Work Support Strategies initiative, we are revolutionizing the way we assist our clients," said DHHS Secretary Al Delia. "We are taking an outdated, fragmented system and turning it into a system that will truly offer families a holistic approach to accessing all the services and supports they need to be successful and self-sufficient."

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When fully implemented, NC FAST will integrate data from 19 legacy systems that collect, maintain and process information for 19 Economic Benefit and Services programs, such as Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services and child care subsidy. NC FAST could also be used for the Health Benefit Exchange the state may establish.

The implementation of the new system is divided into projects over the next several years. Project 1 changes the way clients apply for Food and Nutrition Services, going from a paper-driven to an electronic application process for county DSS staff. The pilot phase of Project 1 began May 21, when Carteret, Catawba, Guilford and Johnston counties went live on the NC FAST production system. Buncombe County went live June 18 and several more counties are slated to go live in early August.

During the past few weeks, DHHS has received valuable, daily feedback from the pilot counties. Several lessons learned are driving changes in the implementation and training approach.

For example, the rollout approach has been divided into two stages. In the first stage, counties enter new applications only in the NC FAST system, while continuing to use the legacy system for re-certifications. In the second stage, all legacy system case conversion oc-

curs and access to the legacy system is turned off. From this point forward all transactions, including new applications, changes in circumstance and re-certifications are done using the NC FAST system.

Additional lessons led to revisions to the county readiness strategy. NC FAST will provide additional staff for onsite county support. Together with the Division of Social Services, NC FAST will perform a series of assessments to determine if a county is ready for the complete go-live in stage two. The training strategy has been revised to close the gap for county staff between training and use of the production system. Training materials now emphasize processes and procedures that gave pilot county users the most difficulty.

“The ultimate goal is that families will have no wrong door as they attempt to access our services,” said NC DSS Director Sherry Bradsher. “The department has worked in close partnership with the county departments of social services to bring NC FAST from being an innovative idea to being the tool counties use to deliver benefits.”

The NC FAST Program has several components in development, including:

- A replacement for the state’s Food and Nutrition Services system;
- A replacement for the Eligibility Information System, used to track eligibility and benefits for TANF, Medicaid, Special Assistance and Refugee Cash and Medical programs;
- ePASS (Electronic Pre-Assessment Screening Service), a secure Internet-based tool that lets individuals check if they are eligible for several North Carolina benefits and services; and
- Document Management, a document imaging and management set of tools.

Another project is under way to address the counties’ urgent need for a comprehensive statewide child services system. These projects will all eventually integrate with the NC FAST Case Management System.

“We know that 80 percent of our families work,” Bradsher added. “By being able to integrate these services in NC FAST, we will help them spend less time in a DSS waiting room and more time helping their family succeed.”

*– Lori Walston,
DHHS Public Affairs*

Possible consolidation for DHHS in Wake

Acting Secretary Al Delia shared with DHHS employees last month a request for proposal (RFP) posted by the state Department of Administration seeking a new property that could potentially house offices for Wake County-based DHHS employees.

“You may have heard talk about a possible consolidation of office space because of the redevelopment of the Dorothea Dix property,” Delia said in a message sent via email to employees. “While we do not know exactly what will happen with the property, the Governor has found it prudent to move forward with plans to relocate the employees currently on the Dix campus. Nothing will happen right away. The RFP simply starts the process of taking bids.”

Delia stated that with about 4,300 employees housed in 30 properties in Wake County, consolidation of office space is under consideration. “It may prove beneficial to our agency to bring some or all of those workers onto a central, Raleigh-area campus after 2014,” he said. “Such a move could help us serve the public better and be more customer focused.” The State Laboratory for Public Health would remain in its new building on Blue Ridge Road.

In its RFP, the Department of Administration is looking for a 20-year lease agreement for existing or



build-to-lease facilities totaling from 850,000 to 1.05 million net square feet of office, public service, and warehouse space including parking.

The proposed lease must be in the Raleigh area and be convenient to major roadways and public transportation. It is preferred to be a campus-like environment located near Raleigh and the Dix campus.

The lease is to be implemented in three phases beginning in 2014 with relocation of about 1,400 employees from facilities on the Dix campus and others who work in buildings with leases that would expire in 2014. ■

— Jim Jones, DHHS Public Affairs

Jarrard to lead Division of MH/DD/SAS

(See related article on page 5)

Jim Jarrard has been appointed acting director of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (MH/DD/SAS). Jarrard has been deputy director of the division since October 2010 and worked closely with the late division director, Steve Jordan.

“The department suffered a devastating loss with Steve’s death and we will miss his energy and passion for mental health services and the people we serve,” said Secretary Al Delia. “Jim Jarrard is a knowledgeable and respected leader who I am confident will continue to lead the Division in a positive direction.”



Jim Jarrard

Jarrard has been with the division since 1994, serving in a variety of roles. Prior to becoming deputy director, Jarrard was chief of the Resource and Regulatory Management Section, which is responsible for fiscal monitoring, accountability, and regulatory compliance, support of information technology and contracts management. He also served as a team lead for Accountability. Jarrard holds a doctorate in theology and was a pastoral counselor and parish minister before joining the division. ■

– Julie Henry,
DHHS Public Affairs

DHHS announces hiring of EEO director

Antonio Cruz recently joined the DHHS as EEO director to consult with senior management regarding Equal Employment Opportunity policy and issues and to provide training to key personnel.

Cruz comes to the department after having served as an EEO officer at the Department of Public Safety. At DHHS he will report to Dan Stewart, assistant secretary for business and finance operations. Cruz occupies an office on the Dix campus at 1003 Richardson Drive. His phone is 919-855-4996.

“We are fortunate to have Antonio aboard and look forward to working with him as we move our agency forward. He has an excellent background and a well-balanced approach that will benefit the Department and DHHS employees,” Stewart said.



Antonio Cruz

During his 11 years prior to his tenure at DPS, Cruz worked in several human resources roles, including manage-

ment of an EEO program, recruitment, training, benefits, employee relations, compensation and classification and performance management.

Cruz is bilingual in English and Spanish, has a bachelor of science in industrial and organizational psychology, is certified as a senior professional in human resources by the Society for Human Resource Management and has trained in mediation at Capital University Law School in Columbus, Ohio.

“I am honored to work for an agency which offers so many important services to a diverse population in the great state of North Carolina, and I look forward to improving workplace diversity and EEO initiatives within the agency,” said Cruz. ■

– Jim Jones, DHHS Public Affairs

DHHS remembers Steve Jordan

Steve Jordan, the director of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS), died in a bicycling accident on July 4.

Jordan became the director of DMH/DD/SAS in September 2010 and was devoted to making significant changes that improve the lives of people with mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance abuse issues.

“It was a tenure far too brief, but in that time Steve led us to model his optimism, his openness, his commitment to those whom we serve, and his vision for our work,” remarked Acting Division Director Jim Jarrard, who served as deputy director under Jordan. “He made a huge impact on the work that we do and he will be greatly missed.”

As one of the state leaders implementing a new model for the delivery and organization of mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services, Jordan had considerable responsibilities throughout the state. Although that work is only partially



Steve Jordan

completed, Jordan's leadership has set the stage for a successful transition to a new model that will result in tangible improvements to the lives of the individuals receiving mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services.

Jordan will be remembered as a very personable leader who knew the names of anyone with whom he came into contact. He made each person feel important by remembering details of their lives.

“Steve was a unique and charismatic leader and was chosen for his position as much for the many things that he was as for those he was not,” said Jarrard. “He was not an insider, with the insider's tendency to quickly jump to the familiar and comfortable solution, rather than the fresher and more hopeful one. He brought, and created new ideas, fresh ideas, and sometimes some pretty wacky ideas. Some of those ideas are now State policy.”

Prior to becoming director of DMH/DD/SAS, Jordan served as the state director of ResCare-North Carolina, managing programs for people with developmental disabilities which served more than 450 adults and 50 children.

Jordan received his Bachelor's degree in Education from Charleston Southern University and a Masters degree in Educational Counseling from the University of South Carolina.

After receiving his Masters in 1989, he joined the organization Mentor in South Carolina and coordinated programs in Columbia and Myrtle Beach. In 1995, he became the Mentor state director for

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North Carolina. During his time at Mentor NC, he started and managed programs for children's mental health, developmental disabilities and persons with dual diagnosis.

Jordan's dedication and work will persist as the state continues a transition to a new model for the delivery and organization of mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services.

"Although the circumstances under which I assume responsibility are extraordinary, I really do feel a sense of duty to continue the direction, vision and enthusiasm that characterize the last two years," said Jarrard. "I am grateful for all of the support that has been offered."

Jordan is survived by his wife Angela and three sons, Chandler, Spencer and William.

A memorial fund has been created to provide education to Jordan's children via the State Employees Credit Union, Jordan Family Special Account, 4262 Louisburg Road, Raleigh, NC 27604. ■

– Chris Pfitzer, DMH/DD/SAS

New equipment, quick response aid in life-saving effort

Note: Sometimes a story is best told by the person who experienced it. John Price, director of the N.C. Office of Rural Health and Community Care shared this account as provided last month by Kay Puckett, family nurse practitioner and clinic director at Westfield Medical Center in Surry County.

I just wanted to take a minute to let you know how thankful and appreciative I am for the new EKG machine that Westfield Medical Center was able to purchase with the assistance from the N.C. Office of Rural Health and Community Care.

This purchase saved a 57-year-old man's life yesterday evening. My office had closed for the day; as it was approximately 5:45 p.m. One of my board members came around to the back entrance of the office and said, "There is a man sitting on the front porch and said he was having chest pain". My medical assistant and I got our BP cuff, stethoscope, and pulse ox and went to the front door.

The man was sitting on the bench on the front porch of the medical center. He reported he had been working outdoors all day and had developed chest tightness and left arm pain 1 ½ hours



Kay Puckett

ago – which he attributed to the heat and (being) "a little dehydrated." His pain worsened and he had pulled his truck off at a school approximately seven miles from (the clinic).

After he began to feel better, he decided to continue traveling. He made it to the church parking lot across from the medical center before he had to pull his loaded truck into the church parking lot, and apparently walked over to the office.

After a brief assessment, we placed him in a wheelchair, rolled him to the exam room, did an EMERGENT EKG with our "NEW" EKG machine and determined he was TRULY having a MI (heart attack) before "our very eyes". We called 911, and transported him to N.C. Baptist Hospital. He went straight to the Cardiac Catheterization lab, had cardiac stent placed and has NO major cardiac damage!!! He is doing great today and may be discharged to his home tomorrow.

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New equipment, quick response
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The EKG machine cost was approximately \$5000.00, but I truly feel we have already earned our return on the investment because this man's life is priceless, and without your final approval for our capital funding for this purchase, this man would probably be at a funeral home in his home town.

Just wanted to say Thank You for allowing Westfield Medical Center to utilize a portion of the N.C. ORHCC funds, and let you know that we have used the funding wisely! We are truly grateful! ■

*Karen (Kay) Puckett,
NP-C Family Nurse
Practitioner/Clinic Director
Westfield Medical Center*

Black Mountain Center honors legacy of Gail West



Gail Lytle West's family joined in the street-naming celebration. From left to right, Secretary Al Delia, DSOHF Interim Director Luckey Welsh, Beaver Wyatt, DSOHF Team Lead Lisa Moon, Amy West, Chuck Lytle, Earl Lytle, Doug Lytle, and Black Mountain Interim Director Richard Rhea.

The new street sign is prominently displayed at the entrance to
Black Mountain Neuro-Medical Treatment Center.

— Photos by Julie Henry

The winding driveway to Black Mountain Neuro-Medical Treatment Center now has a name – it is now known as Gail West Drive, in memory of West, who was center director from 2008 until her death in March 2012.

Family and friends received a warm welcome from staff and residents, who filled an auditorium for the dedication ceremony. One resident spoke from the crowd, remembering that West “took us on trips when nobody else was around to do it for us.”

West spent much of her career at Black Mountain, where she first came to work in 1982. She was a unit manager prior to becoming center director. Under her leadership, Black Mountain joined the other state operated neuro-medical treatment facilities in receiving 5 star ratings by U.S. News and World Report as being among the best nursing homes in the nation. ■

— Julie Henry, DHHS Public Affairs

Secretary Delia visits Riddle Center

Staff of the Riddle Developmental Center in Morganton shared their work on implementing Excels values during a recent visit by Secretary Delia. Their focus on results-oriented outcomes has resulted in increased service delivery to residents, a reduction in resident accidents and injuries, and more opportunities for career growth among staff.

Center Director Art Robarge highlighted innovations in staff scheduling that have reduced overtime pay expenditures and increased staff resources to residents during times of highest activity. He also noted that staff morale has been boosted by a new approach to facility rounds that focuses on positive actions taken by staff.

“To have accomplished so much for our residents without additional funding or staff is a remarkable achievement,” said Center Director Art Robarge. “It is directly attributable to the dedication and creativity of the Riddle Center staff at all levels.”

The J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center provides comprehensive residential care to citizens from 34 counties in the western portion of the state. To be eligible for admission to the Riddle Center, a person must have a diagnosis of profound or severe mental retardation, or a related developmental disability. ■

– Julie Henry, DHHS Public Affairs



A highlight of the Secretary's visit was a tour of the many vocational enrichment programs at the Riddle Center, including traditional craft production and furniture making. Program Director Jerry Reynolds explains the pottery program.

Secretary Delia visited a classroom for communications therapy, which uses a variety of methods, from simple symbol or object boards to complex multi-level computer based communication systems to meet the unique needs of the individual.

Pictured with Secretary Delia are Resident Blake H., Music Therapist Amy Inman, and Interns Dianna Jackson and Liz Gebbie. - Photos by Julie Henry



Secretary kicks-off LeadershipDHHS alumni network

On Thursday, July 19, Secretary Delia participated in a lunch and learn session with approximately 35 graduates of the seven-year-old DHHS leadership identification and development program. In addition several people around the state who were not able to make it to the Raleigh location participated by conference call. The discussion covered everything from an update on Health Care Reform implementation following the Supreme Court's recent decisions to the pending study to determine whether to make Medicaid a separate state agency. Also discussed was the need for better communications, both internally as well as with the press and the general public.

In response to questions about the recent legislative session, the Secretary made the point that communicating and clarifying facts lead to better communication and understanding. Playing

the "blame game" with the General Assembly or any one else does not create a positive relationship for problem solving. Often disagreements occur as a result of different assumptions. "If reasonable people can agree on the facts, then they can come to agreement."

The Secretary also received questions about the recent changes to the work performance plan process. He shared with everyone that the greater majority of those reporting directly to him received a satisfactory rating. In response he shared that his determination was based on "still achieving expected outcomes even under extraordinary circumstances." In addition, he stated that "once someone achieves an exceptional rating does not mean they will be exceptional in the following years." Successful is where we want everyone to be--meeting their expected outcomes--

when someone goes beyond that, then it is appropriate to be recognized for that year's effort. He also shared with the group that he has requested the Division of Human Resource for an audit of how the performance management process is being implemented. "This is a very important accountability tool, and we need to do it right."

The attendees were thanked for their commitment to DHHS and the leadership qualities they have already exhibited. Developing the future workforce is one of the most important functions of a leader, and this program is an effective way to do that. "I am very pleased to have had this opportunity to meet with you and help this next level of leadership development and networking, this LeadershipDHHS Alumni Network get off to a good start." ■

— Sandra Trivett,
Office of Special Projects

Pay raise, 5-day leave package coming your way

Permanent, probationary, trainee, and time-limited State employees received a 1.2 percent salary increase effective July 1, 2012 and a one-time award of five days of additional special vacation leave (referred to as 'Special Leave') by the time the dust settled on the budget adopted earlier this summer by the North Carolina General Assembly.

The pay raise is for workers whose employment date with the state is before July 1, 2012. It translates to about \$30 per month or \$360 per year for employees whose annual salary before the increase was \$30,000. The pay increase will start showing up in end-of-month pay statements starting on July 31, 2012.

The additional leave is a time-limited opportunity. It must be used by June 30, 2013. The extra vacation was given to employees who were in pay status and eligible to earn vacation leave on July 1, 2012.

If you have any questions regarding the salary increase or the special vacation leave, please contact your local Human Resources Office. ■

— Jim Jones, DHHS Public Affairs

DHHS sweeps seven of nine top spots in OSP challenge walk

Once again, DHHS employees out-walked their fellow employees from other state departments, sweeping the Super-Hare category and placing two of the three top finishers in both the Hare and Tortoise divisions, Statewide Wellness Coordinator Katherine B. Hilliard announced July 18. It was the fifth Miles for Wellness activity to be sponsored by the Office of State Personnel and it attracted 90 teams of walkers.

The top team – from Murdoch Development Center – completed more than 7.5 million steps or about 3,770 miles in the course of the competition which ran for 60 days ending in mid-June. The Chile Dip was a virtual pedometer-based challenge which simulate the Chilean coastline.

The competition was part of the Healthy Living Healthy Life Move More Program. The goal was to encourage employees to increase their level of physical activity beyond their normal baseline by completing at least 10,000 steps or about five miles daily.

Top finishers were:

Super Hare Division

- First Place – Murdoch Development Center, Psychologist Speedsters Team 1, Debra Duke captain.
- Second Place – Central Regional Hospital, LBH team, Leslie Quackenbush, captain.
- Third Place – Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities, The Chilean Clarkers, Jenny Wood, captain.

Hare Division

- First Place – Central Regional Hospital, Kevin Smoak, captain.
- Second Place – N.C. Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, Cindy Meyers, captain.
- Third Place, Murdoch Center, Antoinette Jones, captain.

Tortoise Division

- First Place – Division of Water Quality, Pam Behm, captain.
- Second Place – Division of Medical Assistance, Nick Covey, captain.
- Third Place, O'Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center, Avis Hobbs, captain. ■



video conference this month

Secretary Al Delia will hold a video conference with employees on Aug. 14, from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. As before, employees will have the opportunity to submit questions and/or comments to him and have them answered during the conference.

Be thinking what you would like to ask or would like to share with him and other viewers. An email notice will be sent prior to Aug. 14 with more specific information. Stay tuned! ■



– Jim Jones, DHHS Public Affairs

DPH welcomes health students from China

State Public Health Director Dr. Laura Gerald hosted seven students from Wuhan University in China on July 12 to offer a first-hand understanding of the function of a State Division of Public Health.

The students, all graduate or undergraduate nursing and public health majors were in North Carolina as part of the Duke University School of Nursing (DUSON) student exchange program. The five week cultural immersion experience for Wuhan students is designed to acquaint students with the

public health system in North Carolina, its core public health functions, examples of at-risk populations and related community health challenges; provide exposure to the education of public health professionals and engage in selected interdisciplinary public/community health experiences; and immerse students in American culture with exposure to diverse population groups, geographical locations, cultural practices and activities.

To achieve these purposes, the Wuhan students attend classes and hear from

speakers from agencies in the Triangle related to public/community health. They also are observing a cross-section of community-based agencies, take weekly field trips to facilities and state-level agencies, and will tour North Carolina.

The students are Xu Yayun, Qi Feng, Cheng Chang, Yuewen Sun, Rui Cao, Jingjing Li, and Huan Qin. ■

– Renee McCoy,
Division of Public Health



Dr. Laura Gerald, center, poses with students from Wuhan University;; Xu Yayun, Qi Feng, Cheng Chang, Yuewen Sun, Rui Cao, Jingjing Li, and Huan Qin
- Photo by Renee McCoy

Introducing.....ACCOLADES

A new feature, Accolades highlights special recognition of DHHS employees and facilities from outside agencies, stakeholders, partners and peer groups. Interested in sending a contribution? See instructions at the end of this column.

- **Debbye Krueger**, public health dental hygienist was inducted as a fellow of the American Academy of Dental Hygiene in Public Health for her excellence in the practice of dental hygiene.
- **Dr. Rebecca King**, chief of the Oral Health Section in the Division of Public Health, received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. The award is given to association members for exemplary service to the organization.
- **Clementine Pulliam**, director of Beacon Cottage at the Murdoch Developmental Center, was selected as the center's first Employee of the Year in 1982, received the center's inaugural Clementine Pulliam CARE award, given on her birthday, June 2, honoring her 44 years of work and contributions. CARE stands for Caring, Affectionate, Respectful, and Empathetic.
 
- **Cindy DePorter**, branch manager for quality evaluative system in the Division of Health Service Regulation's Nursing Home Licensure and Certification Section, received a "Caught You in the Act" award from George Karahalidis, director of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Training Staff, for mentoring and training counterparts from Tennessee.
- **Linda Hansen**, a back-up approver in the Nursing Home Licensure and Certification Section, also received a "Caught You in the Act" award from CMS's Karahalidis for "high quality work under difficult circumstances," and for "effective use of information to promote the goals and objectives of the Survey & Certification program." She was cited for her positive attitude and sense of humor while tackling the federal Total Management System and providing assistance to Karahalidis with training.
- **Dr. Rakesh Patel**, internal medicine attending physician at Central Regional Hospital, received a second Teacher of the Year award by the PGY 1 UNC Psychiatry Residents. The PGY 1 residents select among all of the physician attendings that taught them over the course of the year which includes UNC psychiatry attendings and UNC Neurology and Family Practice attendings as well as other CRH teaching attendings.
- **Broughton Hospital** in Morganton received recognition as a Gold Star Standard Hospital by NC Prevention Partners for providing the highest standard of excellence for tobacco cessation programs offered to their employees. Broughton refers its employees to effective quit programs (counseling), provides comprehensive benefits (nicotine replacement therapy and prescription medications) and offers attractive incentives to encourage employees to quit tobacco use. ■

If you or someone you work with has received special recognition, let us hear about it. We need details of the recognition, and contact information for the employee and the recognizing organization. Send to Jim.Jones@dhhs.nc.gov.